

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend claim 26 as follows.

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of claims:

1. - 25. (canceled)

26. (currently amended) A method for processing semiconductor wafers comprising:
providing a first supply of drying fluid at a first ~~controlled~~ rate of supply;
providing a second supply of drying fluid at a second ~~controlled~~ rate of supply, the second ~~controlled~~ rate of supply of the second supply of drying fluid being independent of the first ~~controlled~~ rate of supply of the first supply of drying fluid;

storing a supply of decontaminating fluid in a decontaminating fluid tank, the decontaminating fluid tank having an inlet for receiving the second supply of drying fluid, and having an outlet for supplying a combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid at a rate that is based on the second controlled rate of supply of the second supply of drying fluid; [[and]]

simultaneously supplying the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid to a process chamber to decontaminate semiconductor wafers contained therein; and

controlling a first ratio of drying fluid to decontaminating fluid in the process chamber by controlling the first rate of supply of the first supply of drying fluid and independently controlling the second rate of supply of the second supply of drying fluid so that the first ratio of drying fluid to decontaminating fluid in the process chamber is different than a second ratio of drying fluid to decontaminating fluid in the combination of the second supply of the drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid at the outlet of the fluid tank, to optimize the decontamination of the semiconductor wafers.

27. (original) The method of claim 26 wherein the first supply of drying fluid comprises nitrogen gas.

28. (original) The method of claim 26 further comprising heating the first supply of drying fluid prior to release in the process chamber.

29. (original) The method of claim 26 wherein the second supply of drying fluid comprises nitrogen gas.

30. (original) The method of claim 26 further comprising heating the second supply of drying fluid prior to release in the decontaminating fluid tank.

31. (original) The method of claim 26 further comprising heating at least a portion of the decontaminating fluid in the tank from a liquid state into a vapor state.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising heating the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid prior to their release into the process chamber.

33. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 wherein the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid received at the process chamber are in a vapor state.

34. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising, prior to simultaneously supplying the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid to the process chamber:

supplying rinsing fluid into the process chamber containing the semiconductor wafers for rinsing the semiconductor wafers;

rapidly draining the rinsing fluid from the process chamber.

35. (original) The method of claim 34 further comprising rapidly draining the rinsing fluid into a buffer tank having a volume that is greater than or equal to the volume of the process chamber.

36. (original) The method of claim 34 wherein the rinsing fluid comprises deionized water in a liquid state.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 34 wherein the rinsing fluid is completely drained prior to simultaneously supplying the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid to the process chamber.

38. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising, following simultaneously supplying the first supply of drying fluid and the combination of the second supply of drying fluid and the decontaminating fluid to the process chamber, supplying a drying fluid into the chamber for drying the semiconductor wafers.